

Speakers' Bio Notes

in order of presentation

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Chair



Mr. Jerry Mabena

CEO, Motsamayi Tourism Group

Jerry Mabena is a seasoned business leader, renowned for his expertise in tourism, marketing, and property management. He holds a degree in industrial psychology and economics from Rhodes University, a diploma in project management from Damelin College, and a certificate programme in accounting and finance from Wits Business School.

Jerry's illustrious career prior to joining Motsamayi Tourism includes senior roles at esteemed advertising firms and well-respected property and event & exhibition management firms. As CEO of Thebe Services, he adeptly oversaw a diverse portfolio of subsidiaries and associate companies under Thebe Investment Corporation, spanning financial, tourism, media, energy (petroleum services) and property management sectors.

Jerry continues to drive innovation and excellence in the tourism industry as CEO at Motsamayi Tourism Group and as current Chair of the Tourism Business Council of South Africa and of the School of Tourism and hospitality at the University of Johannesburg.

To learn more about his work, visit <https://www.motsamayi.com>

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opening remarks & keynote speakers



Prof. Diane Abrahams

Director, School of Tourism and Hospitality (STH), University of Johannesburg

Prof. Diane Abrahams holds a BSc Hons, an MSc, and a PhD from the University of the Witwatersrand. She has acquired a wealth of skills and expertise during her different roles in the corporate, non-profit, government, and academic sectors. Throughout her career she has demonstrated commitment to economic and social development in South Africa, holding various senior positions in strategic development and governance.

As Director of STH at the University's College of Business and Economics, she leverages her acquired expertise in providing academic stewardship and oversight to the academic departments and the commercial operations unit.

Prof. Abrahams notes innovation and entrepreneurship as important to transform the sector and to create opportunities for the many talented youngsters starting a career in tourism and hospitality.

To learn more about STH, visit <https://www.uj.ac.za>



Dr. Simphiwe Ngqangweni

CEO, National Agricultural Marketing Council (NAMC)

Dr Ngqangweni is an agricultural economist. He obtained his PhD in Agricultural Economics in 2000 from the University of Pretoria, where he also lectured for seven years (2000 – 2006). He worked at the National Agricultural Marketing Council (NAMC) from 2006 to 2008 as a Senior Researcher before he left to join Government senior management as Director for Economic Services and later Director for Agro-processing Support at the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries from 2009 to 2013. He returned to the NAMC in 2013 and in 2020 was appointed as the organization's CEO.

As an academic, Dr. Ngqangweni has published widely in the broad areas of agricultural and food policy, rural markets, land reform and agricultural economic development.

To learn more about NAMC, visit <https://www.namc.co.za>



Mr. Tshifhiwa Tshivhengwa

CEO, Tourism Business Council of South Africa (TBCSA)

Tshifhiwa Tshivhengwa is a respected tourism strategist with over 20 years' experience. He is a thought leader and advocate for tourism development across South Africa and the African continent. He has also served as a member of Tourism Transformation Council, Tourism Grading Council of South Africa, and currently serves on the global Board of Advisors for "The Sigmund Project," which supports innovation and collaboration in tourism across the globe.

Tshifhiwa holds an MSc in International Business, Leadership, and Management from the University of York, a Bachelor of Business Administration on Marketing Communications and a Diploma in Marketing from the Institute of Marketing Management, and a National Diploma in Tourism Management from the University of Johannesburg.

To learn more about TBCSA, visit <https://tbcsa.travel>



Mr. Kwakye Donkor

CEO, Africa Tourism Partners, South Africa

Kwakye Donkor is the Chief Executive of Africa Tourism Partners (ATP), a pan-African tourism development consulting firm. The firm is an affiliate member of the UN Tourism Organization and a recipient of UN Tourism awards. He is a renowned business strategist with expertise in tourism development, marketing, brand management, and MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions/Events).

Kwakye has demonstrated proficiency in formulating and executing corporate strategies, providing business transactional advisory services, and leadership development across various sectors, including education, financial services, and hotel development. His extensive expertise and experience have granted him the opportunity to frequently serve on expert panels organized by international organizations such as UN Tourism, AfCFTA, Afrexim Bank, the African Union (AU), SADC, The World Bank Group, GIZ, and media groups such as BBC, CNBC Africa, Channel Africa, ENCA, and SABC, among others.

To learn more about ATP, visit <https://africatourismpartners.com>

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setting the stage speakers



Ms. Jeanette Sutherland

Founder, AgriLuxe Marketing

With a career spanning the World Bank Group, the International Trade Centre, and the CARICOM Secretariat, Jeanette spent over 20 years working at the intersection of agriculture, trade, and the creative economy.

As the founder of AgriLuxe Marketing, she is at the forefront of an effort to build tourism trade between Africa and the Caribbean centered on the regions' indigenous and neglected crops, bundled with their rich creative and cultural assets.

At a time when global food systems are in crisis, she sees these crops – and the creative expressions surrounding them – as keys to climate-smart development and economic regeneration.

To learn more about Jeanette and her work, visit www.agriluxemarketing.com



Dr. Lisa Chase

Professor, University of Vermont
Extension & Director, Vermont Tourism
Research Center

Lisa Chase is a Natural Resources Specialist with University of Vermont Extension, where she has focused on recreation and tourism enterprises since 2002. She became the Director of the Vermont Tourism Research Center in July of 2004. Prior to working in Vermont, Lisa conducted research and outreach in New York, Colorado, Costa Rica and Ecuador, among other places.

Her areas of expertise include nature-based tourism, agritourism, community development, environmental conflict resolution. She is also the past President and current Education Co-Chair of the Global Agritourism Network (GAN)

Lisa has graduate degrees, including a PhD in Natural Resource Management and Policy, from Cornell University and a B.A. in Economics from the University of Michigan.

To learn more about her work in GAN, visit <https://globalagritourismnetwork.org>

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case study speakers



Mr. Michael Diaber

General Manager, !Khwa ttu

Mr. Daiber is an anthropologist by training and Manager at !Khwa ttu – an award-winning San heritage and education center and thriving tourism destination. He has worked with the San communities of southern Africa for almost three decades. In his words, !Khwa ttu is a place to tell their story. The exhibitions, trails, gardens, architecture, and guided experiences are designed to engage the body and senses as much as the mind.

To learn more about !Khwa ttu, visit <https://www.khwattu.org>



Ms. Gracia Bvute

Director & Head Chef, PaBvute
Gourmet Pvt Ltd, Zimbabwe

Gracia Bvute, a young, self-taught chef, is celebrated for her innovative approach to Zimbabwean cuisine. Her work has garnered international attention, including features in GQ magazine and an appearance on the "Best Ever Food Review Show."

In 2023, Gracia won the Harare province and Zimbabwe national Tourism Innovation Challenge for her project, "Putting Zimbabwean Cuisine on the Map." The project showcased the country's diverse culinary offerings through engaging videos, garnering 2.5 million views on YouTube. The following year, at the UN Tourism's first Regional Forum on Gastronomy Tourism for Africa, she won the Regional Gastronomy Pitch Challenge with her company, PaBvute Gourmet, that specialises in creating authentic Zimbabwean culinary experiences.

Chef Bvute has degrees in international hospitality management and business administration and is a graduate of the Academy for Women Entrepreneurs (AWE).

To learn more about Gracia's work, visit
https://www.instagram.com/pabvute_gourmet/?hl=en



Ms. Nyanda Peltier Charles

Executive Chef & Founder, WATO Festival

Widely recognized for her innovation in authentic Creole Caribbean cuisine, Chef Nyanda is a bold, creative, and unconventional force in the culinary world. Initially pursuing studies in art and design in the UK, she eventually completed a Diploma in Culinary Arts, with distinction.

She established several food-related businesses, including in cake design, catering and a restaurant. She is currently the Consulting Executive Chef at Rosalie Bay Eco Resort and Spa, where she is redefining farm-to-table dining and incorporating outdoor cooking adventures into the resort's culinary offerings. She also provides private culinary training and consultations across Dominica, working with various companies to elevate her country's food industry.

Chef Nyanda is the creative behind WATO, a unique outdoor event celebrating Fire and Indigenous, African, and Creole Caribbean flavours.



Ms. Retang Phaahla

CEO, Setšong African Tea Crafters

Although her formal training is in surveying – she has a Bachelor of Science from the University of Pretoria – Retang is a committed social entrepreneur. Setšong African Tea Crafters, a brand that features 8 flavors, uses indigenous flora from the natural landscapes of Limpopo. In developing the products, she partnered with a community forum of farmers and indigenous knowledge holders from Sekhukhune named, Bapedi a re Boeleng Setšong.

To learn more about Setšong African African Tea Crafters, visit www.setsongtea.com



Ms. Gillian Goddard

Founder, Cross Atlantic Chocolate Collective

Gillian Goddard is a systems thinker, community organizer, and chocolate maker who engages in the food and agriculture sectors to instigate change.

Founder of the Alliance of Rural Communities in 2014, a non-profit focussed on principles of regenerative farming, sustainable rural livelihood creation, and circular economy.

In 2021, Goddard expanded her community of intention as the Founder of the Cross Atlantic Chocolate Collective, which unites farming communities from Africa, the Caribbean, North America, England, and Europe.

By combining experiences around food and community, Goddard tackles complex issues around power, decolonization, and emancipation in academic, grassroots, and commercial spaces.

To learn more about the Cross Atlantic Chocolate Collective, visit <https://www.chocolaterebellion.com>



Mr. Steve Andrews

Founder, Soothing Touch Spa and The Bamboo Retreat

Steve Andrews is a wellness guru and seasoned spa therapist, with over 29 years in the health and wellness sector, spanning the Caribbean, Africa, and Europe. He has also chaired the Caribbean Wellness and Spa Association.

Steve has in-depth knowledge of developing spas, from conceptualization to implementation. Included among his specializations is product development using natural and agricultural ingredients.

In 2018, Steve became the Global Wellness Ambassador for Barbados. As the CEO and Master Therapist, he leads Steve Andrews and Associates, where he is dedicated to sharing the benefits of massage therapy, and the use of natural products, with practitioners worldwide.

To learn more about his work visit <https://steveandrewsassociates.com>

SEMINAR

special presentation speakers



Mr. Henry Mathys

Strategic Programme Manager, V&A Waterfront

Henry Mathys is a strategic programme lead with expertise in inclusive economic development, sustainable tourism, and corporate transformation. As Strategic Programme Manager at the V&A Waterfront, he coordinates cross-functional strategies across one of Africa's leading destinations, aligning growth with social and environmental impact.

Previously serving as Food Ecosystem Head and Senior Manager for Social Impact, Henry led the Waterfront's inclusive economic strategy, overseeing SME development, circular food systems, and job creation initiatives. He serves on the boards of the Craft and Design Institute and CDI Capital, and is a former Chair of the South African Working Group of the Africa Shared Value Initiative.

To learn more about his work, visit: www.linkedin.com/in/henry-mathys



Ms. Shadel Nyack Compton

Managing Director, Belmont Estate

Shadel is an esteemed entrepreneur, legal professional, and agricultural innovator, who has successfully positioned Belmont Estate as a leading model of agro-farming, agro-tourism, and sustainable agribusiness in the Caribbean.

She has served as Chair of the Board of Directors of the Grenada Board of Tourism and Deputy Chair of the Grenada Tourism Authority. She has earned numerous accolades, including the Grenada Chamber of Industry and Commerce Businesswoman of the Year Award (2013) and the prestigious Anthony N. Sabga Award for Excellence in Entrepreneurship (2017) – the first woman and first Grenadian to receive this honour.

Shadel holds a Juris Doctor and a Master of Arts in International Law from Georgetown University and a Master of Arts in Agribusiness from Kansas State University.

To learn more about Belmont Estate, visit:
<https://belmontestategrenada.com>



Ms. Ena Harvey

Agritourism Specialist

Ena Harvey is an internationally recognized expert in agrotourism with over 20 years' experience across Latin America and the Caribbean, the South Pacific, and Saudi Arabia. Ena possesses a wealth of knowledge and hands-on operational experience in international development and is passionate about the food culture and traditions of the Caribbean.



Ms. Isolina Boto

Head of Networks and Alliances,
COLEAD

Isolina Boto has over 25 years of experience in agricultural development, leading agri-food projects and initiatives to support SMEs, entrepreneurs, and farmers' organizations across Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific. She also developed an agrotourism portfolio, fostering synergies between the agriculture and tourism sectors across these regions.

To learn more about her work, visit <https://www.colead.link>



Mr. Mark L Forgenie

Managing Director, Caribbean Sea & Air Marketing Co. Ltd

With degrees and licenses in nautical science from the University of South Hampton, Warsash Maritime College, specializing in gas, liquid, and chemical tankers, Mark Louis Forgenie's early career was forged in the maritime and then the oilfield sector.

In 2012, Mark took over the operations of his family's cocoa estate in Moruga Trinidad. As part of his regeneration and diversification plans for the land, he established Vista Dorado Estates and introduced the cultivation of the organically grown, Moruga Hill Rice. The rice has been successfully introduced to local and international markets and celebrated for its flavor, taste, and red colour. Mark has since led efforts to obtain a Geographical Indicator label for this non-GMO, nutrient-dense rice, cultivated using sustainable agricultural practices, unique to Moruga Hills.

In promoting this indigenous rice, Mark is a proud member of the Moruga Hill Rice Organic Producers, an association of farmers, who lobby for embracing sustainable technologies and practices in agriculture.

To learn more about his work, visit <https://vistadoradoestates.com>



Mr. Muthuri Kinyamu

Founder, Turnup.Travel

Muthuri Kinyamu is a Kenyan travel entrepreneur, destination marketing strategist, and advocate for sustainable tourism across Africa.

Muthuri serves on the Board of Ecotourism Kenya, where he contributes to advancing responsible travel that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people. He is actively involved in shaping the narrative around tourism's role in rural development, community engagement, and inclusive economic growth.

Muthuri brings a valuable perspective on the role of tour operators in catalysing agritourism, supporting smallholder farmers, and fostering partnerships between Africa and the Caribbean.

To learn more about his travel design and media company, visit <https://turnup.travel>



Ms. Hafsa Abdulsalam

CEO, LIAT20

Hafsa Abdulsalam is a seasoned leader in the aviation ecosystem, bringing over two decades of experience across multiple facets of the industry. Her expertise spans sales, commercial and technical contracts, business development, strategy formulation, change management, and strategic marketing. Hafsa's proven track record includes identifying new market opportunities, steering large-scale operational transformations, and delivering sustainable revenue growth.

Prior to her current role, Hafsa was Group Sales Director at AJW Group, where she directed global sales and operations strategies. She is also Director & Managing Partner at SAHA Aviation Services, where she oversees M&A transactions, advises on sales and operational strategies, and manages aviation assets for clients globally.

Hafsa holds an MBA from Henley Business School and a BSc in Geography. Her broad industry background, deep commercial acumen, and commitment to innovation position her as a transformative force in shaping the future of the airline industry.

To learn more about LIAT20, visit <https://www.flyliat20.com>



Mr. Okechukwu Ihejirika

Regional Chief Operating Officer,
Caribbean Office, Afreximbank

Before assuming his current role, Okechukwu led the Trade Services unit at the African Export Import Bank (Afreximbank) and brings over 20 years extensive trade finance experience to the institution.

Prior to joining Afreximbank, he held senior positions in trade finance at various Nigerian banks, culminating in his role as Head of Trade Finance at Union Bank of Nigeria.

Okechukwu holds an MBA in International Business from the American Intercontinental University and a Bachelor of Science in Actuarial Science and Insurance from Imo State University.

To learn more about Afrieximbank, visit <https://www.afreximbank.com>



Mr. Dave Varty

Founder & CEO, Londolozi Game Reserve

Over the past 5 decades, Dave has worked on and/or established several sustainable conservation models for tourism around the world, including facilitating the first private-public sector partnership with National parks and WWF at Ngala Game Reserve, Mpumalanga; establishing the Mnemba Island lodge and lodges in the Northern Tanzanian circuit; and establishing the first transformation conservation tourism company in Zimbabwe, at the Matetsi Concession.

Dave has also served as a special advisor to several government administrations, including President Mandela, on conservation practices and the potential of wildlife economy for sustainable rural livelihoods and development.

To learn more about his work, visit <https://www.londolozi.com>



Mr. Chaz Brown

Executive Chef, Garces Event

Chef Chaz Brown is a Trinidadian-American chef, culinary innovator, and entrepreneur with over two decades of experience spanning fine dining, restaurant development, and food technology. A graduate of the French Culinary Institute, his journey includes kitchens like Nobu Manhattan, Fatty Crab, and Le Bec-Fin, as well as appearances on Top Chef and Around the World in 80 Plates. Deeply inspired by the ingredients and traditions of Trinidadian and West African cuisine, Chaz is passionate about farm-to-table cooking and celebrating heritage through flavour and sustainability.

Beyond the kitchen, Chaz co-founded xtraCHEF, a groundbreaking culinary software platform that automated food costing and inventory, transforming restaurant operations nationwide. The platform's acquisition by Toast for \$82 million in 2020 solidified his belief in the power of innovation to reshape the food world. Today, he is channelling his culinary and entrepreneurial experience into launching a food festival in Trinidad & Tobago – one that celebrates Caribbean culture, showcases local ingredients, and creates lasting economic and cultural impact for agriculture and food insecurities.

To learn more about his work, visit <https://www.garcesevents.com>

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academia panel discussion



Prof. Michael Abberton

Director, West Africa and Head of
Genetic Resources Center, IITA

Professor Michael Abberton is the Director of IITA, West Africa and Head of Genetic Resources Center of IITA. He also serves as the director of genetic innovations and has been coordinating several research initiatives to drive the introduction and utilization of neglected and underutilized crops conserved at IITA gene bank for climate-resilient cropping systems towards food and nutrition security in sub-Saharan Africa. Prof. Abberton is currently the IITA lead for the Vision for Adapted Crops and Soils (VACS) project.

To learn more about IITA visit <https://www.iita.org>



Dr. Hema Kesa

Director of the Food Evolution
Research Laboratory (FERL)

Dr. Kesa is also a Senior lecturer at the School of Tourism and Hospitality, University of Johannesburg. Her research interests are in Community Nutrition and Food Security. Hema also has a keen interest in the Food Service Industry and encourages the awareness and importance of good nutrition in the industry. Her current research projects are focused on nutrition transition and the evolution of dietary habits of the South African population.

To learn more about her work, visit <https://ferl.co.za>



Dr. Wendy-Ann P Isaac

Head, Department of Food Production,
UWI

Wendy-Ann P Isaac is a senior lecturer and Head of the Department of Food Production at the University of the West Indies (UWI), specializing in sustainable agriculture, weed science, and innovative farming technologies like protected and controlled environment agriculture. With over 22 years of teaching experience, she has guided both undergraduate and postgraduate students in areas such as crop production, pest management, and food security. She has authored and co-authored numerous books, book chapters, and research papers, focusing on sustainable food production, climate change impacts on agriculture, and food security in the Caribbean and beyond. Her work has been published in respected international journals, and she has co-edited key publications on topics like climate-smart agriculture and environmental sustainability. Beyond her academic contributions, Dr. Isaac is actively involved in research projects, community outreach, and training programmes aimed at improving agricultural practices and food security in the Caribbean. She also serves on the editorial boards of several leading journals.

To learn more about her work, visit <https://www.uwi.edu>



Dr. Yolisa Pakela-Jezile

Head, Institute for Tropical and Subtropical Crops, ARC

Yolisa Pakela-Jezile is passionate about development and deployment of appropriate technologies and skills for thriving agribusinesses, particularly in rural communities. She has spent much of her career in the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) where she promotes opportunities presented by scientific research and technological innovation by careful management to extract maximum value. She currently heads the ARC's Institute for Tropical and Subtropical Crops and is the acting Group Executive for the Crop Science, Natural Resources and Engineering Division.

To learn more about ARC, visit: <https://www.arc.agric.za/Pages/Home.aspx>

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development partners panel discussion



Mr. Sam Nganga

Upstream Manager, International Finance Corporation (IFC)

Sam leads IFC's early-stage project development and advisory services team in the Manufacturing, Agribusiness and Services sectors across East and Southern Africa. He previously served as the Regional Head of Operations for IFC in Africa and has led high-impact programs in tertiary education; telecoms and digital financial services; and Small and Medium-Enterprise investment.

To learn more about IFC, visit: <https://www.ifc.org/en/home>



Mr. William Castro Rodriguez

Programme Officer & Caribbean
Country Manager, ITC

William joined the International Trade Centre (ITC) in 2018 to coordinate projects in the Caribbean, including Alliances for Action programs, promoting public-private partnerships for agribusiness and sustainable food systems. Before ITC, he worked at the Market Access Division of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and at an Economics and Trade consulting firm, DASA, in the Dominican Republic.

He has a degree in Economics from PUCMM Santo Domingo, with a Master's in International Economic Policies from the Paris Institute of Political Studies.

To learn more about ITC, visit: <https://www.intracen.org>



Ms. Sandra Carvão

Director, Market Intelligence, Policies,
and Competitiveness, UN Tourism

Sandra Carvão has held her current post at UN Tourism, since 2018. Before that, she was Chief of Communications and Publications for 8 years, responsible for its strategic positioning.

She was Deputy Chief of Market Trends, Competitiveness, and Trade in Tourism Services, between 2007-2010, during which she coordinated the organization's Tourism Resilience Committee in the context of the 2008-2009 global economic crisis.

Prior to joining UN Tourism in 2003, Sandra was a market manager at the Portuguese National Tourist Office in Lisbon.

Sandra has a degree in International Relations, Economics Branch from the Instituto de Ciências Sociais e Políticas, Universidade Técnica de Lisboa and a post graduate degree in marketing from the Universidade Complutense de Madrid.

To learn more about UNWTO, visit: <https://www.unwto.org>



Ms. Shauna Brandon

Rural Development Specialist, IICA

Shauna Brandon is a development specialist dedicated to community development, economic transformation and social upliftment. Ms. Brandon has worked at the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) for the past 18 years, which has spanned work in capacity building of farmer and rural community organisations, rural tourism development, supporting women in agriculture, promoting youth involvement in agriculture, project management, building food safety capacities and promoting green business opportunities through the bio-economy .

Shauna is the co-chair of IICA's Caribbean Agri-Tourism Network and has worked with community groups in Jamaica to promote and strengthen rural tourism initiatives. She holds a BSc in Economics and an Msc in the Economics and Management of Rural Development. She has also participated in training courses on Rural Tourism delivered in Mexico and Argentina.

To learn more about IICA, visit <https://iica.int/en/>



Dr. Wendell Samuel

Sr. Advisor and Acting Assistant
Secretary General, CARICOM

Wendell Samuel, a national of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, is Senior Advisor to the CARICOM Secretary-General and Acting Assistant Secretary-General, Economic Integration Innovation and Development.

Before joining the Secretariat, Mr. Samuel held positions of Deputy Division Chief in the African, and Western Hemisphere Departments of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and most recently the Center Coordinator for Caribbean Regional Technical Assistance Center (CARTAC). Prior to joining the IMF, Mr. Samuel held positions of Senior Director of Research and Information at the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank and Lecturer in Economics at The University of the West Indies (UWI), Cave Hill Campus. He holds a bachelor's and a master's degree in economics from UWI, and a Ph.D. in Economics from New York University.

To learn more about CARICOM, visit: <https://caricom.org>



Dr. Tshilidzi Madzivhandila

CEO, FANRPAN

Dr. Madzivhandila is an experienced applied research, policy analysis, monitoring and evaluation, policy advocacy specialist in food systems, agriculture and natural resources (FANR). He has more than 20 years working experience, with six (6) of these being at an executive management level. Tshilidzi holds a PhD Degree in Economics – specializing in public policies and programmes evaluation. Currently he is the Chief and Executive Officer (CEO) and Head of Mission of the Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (**FANRPAN**).

To learn more about FANRPAN's program, visit: <https://fanrpan.org>